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## INTRODUCTION

Due to North Carolina's unfavorable ranking among states on a number of child health indicators, the State Center has been fairly diligent in tracking, analyzing, and reporting those indicators over many years. In 1994, five special studies dealt with some aspect of child health.<sup>1-5</sup> In 1995, a new study examines the entire spectrum of adolescent health (ages 10-19).<sup>6</sup> Results reveal some positive trends – increased adolescent use of early prenatal care and nonmedical prenatal services, reduced fetal and infant mortality among adolescent mothers, and reduced adolescent mortality from motor vehicle and other unintentional injuries. At the same time, the report reveals rising levels of adolescent pregnancy, unmarried childbearing, sexually transmitted diseases, homicide, suicide, and crime as well as high prevalences of behaviors that often underlie those events. Accordingly, many county health departments now rank adolescent health issues among their top priorities.<sup>7</sup>

Given the above recent analysis for the state's older youth, the present report focuses on children under 10 years. Together, the two reports should prove useful to those involved in a variety of child health initiatives currently under way in North Carolina. For younger children, these include several new initiatives of the State Center:

- Development of a statewide immunization registry and online notification system;

- Computerization of the Kindergarten Health Assessment form on a pilot basis;
- Conducting an interview survey to collect in 1995 information pertinent to child health; and
- Planning of a child health database to follow children from birth to school age.

The last two initiatives are directly funded by a 4-year grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The proposed annual health interview survey, called *North Carolina Health Profile (NCHP)* and first undertaken in 1995, is a telephone survey of a random sample of about 1,500 North Carolina households. The purpose is to collect information needed to assess and monitor the state's health care system, based on policy principles formulated by the state's Health Planning Commission. Each annual survey is intended to include a core module, to be used each year, and a special module to vary as data needs require.

In 1995, the NCHP's special module will collect information about the health care needs of children under six years of age. This focus will be useful to those involved in the state's Smart Start Program as well as other children's initiatives of the state. Results of the Fall 1995 NCHP are expected to be available next spring.